

On Alleged “Russian Military Interventions”, or Lack Thereof

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My [recent article](#) about a possible Russian military intervention in the Syrian conflict triggered, amongst mostly rational reactions, a few angry and frustrated one from folks who were apparently disgusted with the Russian refusal to get militarily involved in Novorussia and Syria. Since such angry protests are also often echoed on other supposedly pro-Russian blogs and websites I think that it is worthwhile to address the substance of these criticisms once again. So let's start with the basics:

The legal purpose of the Russian Armed Forces.

The [Federal Law N61-F3 “On Defense”](#), Section IV, Article 10, Para 2 clearly states that the mission of the Russian Armed Forces is to “*repel aggression against the Russian Federation, the armed defense of the integrity and inviolability of the territory of the Russian Federation, and to carry out tasks in accordance with international treaties of the Russian Federation*”. That's it. Defend the territory of Russia or to carry out tasks in accordance to ratified treaties. These are the sole functions of the Russian Armed Forces.

The [Russian Constitution](#), Chapter IV, Article 80, Para 2 clearly states that “*The President of the Russian Federation shall be guarantor of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, of the rights and freedoms of man and citizen. According to the rules fixed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, he shall adopt measures to protect the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, its independence and state integrity, ensure coordinated functioning and interaction of all the bodies of state power*”.

Now, for an American used to have, on average, about one new war every year, this might seem mind boggling, but the Russian Federation has absolutely no desire to become an “anti-USA” and get involved in constant military operations abroad. Not only that, but the laws of the Russian Federation specifically forbid this.

Russia is not the world policeman, she does not have a network of 700-1000 bases worldwide (depending on your definition of ‘base’) but an army specifically designed to operate withing 1000km or less from the Russian border and the President does not have the legal mandate to use the Russian armed forces to solve foreign crises.

The political mandate of the Russian President

Putin's real power is not based on any written Russian law. His real power is in the fact that he has the support of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people. How did he achieve such an amazing popularity? It was not by funding a multi-billion dollar propaganda campaign, or by making empty promises. Putin's popularity is simply a direct result of the

fact that Putin's actions are in conformity with the will and desires of the Russian people.

Again, for an American who has seen every single US President grossly betray all his promises and who is used to have somebody in the White House whom a minority of Americans really support, this might be mind boggling, but in Russia the President actually enjoys the support of the people.

And the fact is that poll after poll [the majority of the Russian people \(67%\) are opposed any overt Russian military intervention in the Donbass](#). That is a fact which the "hurray patriots" always conveniently ignore, but it is a fact nonetheless. Now if most Russian are opposed to a Russian military intervention in Novorussia, what percentage do you think would approve of a Russian military intervention in Syria?

This might sounds trite, but Putin was elected by the Russian people to defend their interests. He was not elected by the people of Novorussia or Syria. In fact, Russia has absolutely no obligation to anybody, not even a moral obligation to help. Those who are disgusted by the lack of Russian military intervention seem to somehow assume that Russia "must" or "should" "do something" simply because she could do it. That is absolutely not true. Even if Russian could successfully intervene in Novorussia (she can) or Syria (she cannot) - that does not at all automatically mean that she has to take any such action.

Yes, Russia has provided support to Novorussia and Syria, but not because she "owed" them anything, but because she chose to help. This help, however, does not automatically entail that the Russian commitment is open-ended and that Putin "has to" send Russian soldiers into combat if needed.

Besides, when is the last time any country send its soldiers to help Russia and, if needed, die for her?

Why the Russian soldier is willing to die in combat

I have three kids and I can easily imagine what the parents of a young man from, say, Tula or Pskov would feel if their son died in combat somewhere in Syria. Here is the text of the oath taken by each Russian soldier:

I, (full name), do solemnly swear allegiance to the Fatherland - the Russian Federation. I swear to faithfully observe the Constitution of the Russian Federation, to comply strictly with the requirements of the military regulations, the orders of my commanders and superiors. I swear to honorably perform my military duties, to courageously defend the freedom, independence and constitutional order of Russia, the people and the fatherland.

There is no mention of Syria or any other country in this, is there?

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan the Soviet propagandists came up with a cute concept "интернациональный долг" or "international duty". This idea was derived from the Marxist concept of "proletarian internationalism". And it is true that the Soviet Constitution (in articles 28 and 30) included the following language:

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union aims at strengthening the positions of

world socialism, supporting the struggle of peoples for national liberation and social progress" (...) "the Soviet Union as part of the world socialist system, the socialist community develops and strengthens friendship and cooperation, comradely mutual assistance with other socialist countries on the basis of a socialist internationalism

There are probably those who are still nostalgic of the "good old days" when the Soviet Union was involved in conflicts in Asia, Africa or Latin America, but I am most definitely not one of them. And neither are the vast majority of Russians who remember exactly the price paid in blood for such ideological nonsense.

Again, for a person living in the USA where it is normal to see "posts" of "Veterans of Foreign Wars" (as if the US ever had a domestic one in living memory!) all over the country and where everybody know a least one relative, friend or neighbor who lost a family member in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere - this might seem ridiculous. But for a Russian national not only is this not ridiculous, it is quite literally sacred. Why? Because it means that if their son or daughter are only sent into harms way when the Russian nation is under attack. This is also why the men of the [6th Company in Ulus-Kert](#) were willing to die: because they were fighting for their Motherland, not for a college tuition, not to avoid jail or unemployment and not because they thought they could visit the world and kill brown people.

The pitfalls of "limited" military interventions

Ask yourself, how do wars typically end? Specifically, how many wars do you know of when both parties agreed to stop and sign some kind of peace treaty? The fact is that most wars end up in a victory for one side and a defeat for the other. And that, in turn, means that as long as the stronger party does not have the means to fully defeat the weaker one, the war will continue. The perfect example of that was the war in Afghanistan in which the Soviets easily invaded the country and defeated the "freedom fighters" [which later became known as "al-Qaeda", courtesy of the US CIA] but were unable to pursue them into Pakistan and Iran. Thus the anti-Soviet forces, while "weaker", could deny the Soviets their "victory" *simply by surviving* and even successfully resisting them in some locations (such as the Panjshir Valley).

This is the rough map of the territory currently controlled by Daesh:



Image: Daesh area of operations

As you can see from the map, Daesh currently is active in both Syria and Iraq, and we also know that they have made inroad into Lebanon and Egypt. We can also be certain that Daesh could, if needed, move inside Saudi Arabia. By any measure, the territory currently more or less controlled by Daesh or, more accurately, the territory where Daesh can operate is huge. So in this context, what would "victory" mean? Eradicating Daesh from the entire Middle-East, of course. We have already seen what happened when the Syrian military basically defeated Daesh - Daesh just retreated into Iraq, that's all. And that was enough to deny the Syrians their victory.

Can Daesh be defeated? Absolutely. But only if the AngloZionist would stop their anti-Shia crusade and let Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Iraq crush these Takfiri lunatics. But since that is

absolutely unacceptable to the AngloZionsts, the war will go on. And it is in this context that some would have Russia enter the conflict?! That is insane!

Any Russian commitment, besides being of dubious legality and politically very dangerous for Putin, would have to be either half-hearted or open-ended. In the first case it would be useless and in the second one extremely dangerous.

What about only sending aircraft?

Contrary to what some commentators have written, sending 6 MiG-31s could make a difference: six MiG-31s would mean 2 on combat air patrol, 2 ready to take-off and 2 in routine maintenance. Also, 2 MiG-31s in the air would be enough to monitor the Syrian airspace and defend it from any intruder (you can think of the MiG-31 as a 'mini AWACS' since it has an advanced passive electronically scanned array radar and weapons capable of tracking 10 targets while simultaneously engaging four of them at a very long range (as far as 200km). The problem with that is that all this fancy hardware serves no purpose against Daesh which has no air force.

Some have suggested that the MiG-31s could be used to protect Syria from a US cruise missile attack. While it is true that the MiG-31 is capable of engaging low-flying cruise missiles, the problem here is that each MiG-31 can only carry 4-6 air-to-air missiles. Thus a 2 MiG-31s patrol could only engage 12 cruise missiles at most, unless they begin chasing down each one and use their 23mm canon. Since any US attack on Syria would involve many more cruise missiles, there is really very little the MiG-31s could do. A much more effective defense would be provided by the S-300 and this is why the US and Israel were so opposed to any S-300 deliveries to Syria.

Others have suggested that Russia could send MiG-29s. Bad choice. The MiG-29 is a formidable close-in combat fighter, but a poor close air support aircraft. If the mission is the support of Syrian combat operations, then SU-24 and, especially, SU-25 would be much better suited. As far as I know, not a single report mentioned these.

How Syria can be assisted

First and foremost, I want to remind everybody that Russia has already single-handedly stopped a planned US attack on Syria by simultaneously sending a naval task force off the Syrian coast (thereby providing the Syrians of a full view of the airspace in and around Syria) and by brilliantly suggesting that Syria get rid of her (utterly useless) chemical weapons (which, of course, some saw as a "betrayal" and "disarming" of Syria). Russia can still help Syria by sending military hardware, advisors, sharing intelligence and, most importantly, providing political cover.

Should the Syrian armed forces truly suffer from a military reversal and should the government be threatened, Hezbollah will be the first to intervene (as they already have), followed by Iran (as they, reportedly, also already have). With Hezbollah and Iranian boots on the ground (the latter probably also in Hezbollah uniforms), there is no need at all for Russian forces. At least not "regular" military ones.

It is possible, and even likely, that the Russians would (or already have) send covert units into Syria. What we are talking here are GRU and SVR special teams, mostly posing as "advisors" or private military contractors or even "technical assistance" personnel. Still, by

all accounts the Syrian forces are extremely capable and we should not assume that they need any special outside expertise. And to the degree that outside assistance would be needed, Hezbollah would probably be much better suited for this task than Russian units.

As far as I know, the Syrians do lack some types modern equipment, especially modern electronics and optics. I am confident that the Russians can supply those, if needed through Iran. Finally, since this war has been going on for so many years already, I am sure that the Syrian military has difficulties with spares and repairs. Here again, Iran can help, with Russian aid if needed.

Conclusion

For the Russians to intervene directly in Syria would be illegal, politically impossible and pragmatically ineffective. Russia is much better off playing her role in the Hezbollah-Iran-Russia "chain of support" for Syria.

For all the AngloZionist propaganda about the resurgent Russian Bear planning to invade Europe and for all the sophomoric demands by pseudo-friends of Russia for Russian military interventions - Russia has absolutely no obligation or intention to intervene anywhere. The US example has already shown how costly and self-defeating it is for a country to declare itself the world policeman and to use military force to try to solve every one of the world's crises. Russia is not the USA and she is not even an "anti-USA". And that is, in my opinion, a very good thing for everybody.

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